DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 231 082 EA 015 772

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TITLE School Site Budgeting/Management: The State of the Art.
PUB DATE Jan 83
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Montreal, Quebec, Canada, April 11-15, 1983). This short paper is based on a more comprehensive commercially-available document. (See under "Availability.")
AVAILABLE FROM Education Management Consultants, 181 Ridgewood Road, West Hartford, CT 06107 (full report available at $15.00; quantity orders, $13.00 per copy).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Role; *Budgeting; Citizen Participation; *Decentralization; Elementary Secondary Education; Interviews; Principals; *Resource Allocation; *School Based Management; Teacher Administrator Relationship

ABSTRACT

This paper first explains that in school site budgeting management, principals, teachers, and community members are involved in allocating school funds appropriated by district offices to individual schools. After briefly commenting on the origins, assumptions, and process of school site budgeting management, the roles of the participants are outlined. To study this process of school organization, interviews were conducted at two suburban and two urban school systems located in four cities. Among the advantages of the process cited in the summary of findings are: (1) a cooperative examination of existing practices and programs, (2) the involvement of teachers in schools' financial status and spending limitations, (3) a closer relationship between parents and teachers, and (4) decision-making closer to the students. (MLF)

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School Site Budgeting/Management: The State of the Art

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AERA 1983

EA 015 772

Printed in U.S.A.

School Site Budgeting/Management: The State of the Art

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ABSTRACT

The early Common School movement in the United States was originally organized at the local level to keep schools close to the people. During the 1920's and 1970's the governance of schools became more centralized. At present there is a demand for greater representativeness in public education through citizen participation and community schools, stimulated by and supported through such federal mandates as E.S.E.A. Title I and Education for All Handicapped Children Act.

Centralized decision-making involves hierarchical school organization in which decisions typically flow downward through successive levels of bureacracy. With a decentralized school system, levels of bureacracy are few and decisions are made at every level of the organization.

The basic assumptions of school site budgeting/management are : (1) the school budget becomes more visible and effective as a policy-making tool; (2) instructional and administrative priorities are expressed through resource allocation; (3) resource allocation decision-making that best satisfies individual learning needs is made closer to the child by the school principal, staff, parents and community members; and (4) there is greater probability that equal access through quality instruction is provided.

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Origins

The early Common School movement in the United States was originally organized to keep schools close to the people. During the 1920's and 1970's the governance of public school education became more centralized. At present, stimulated by and supported through such federal mandates as E.S.E.A. Title I and the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, there is a demand for greater participation and representativeness in public education.

Assumptions

School Site Budgeting/Management has emerged as a more adequate management system data base for decisionmaking and monitoring. The basic assumptions of School Site Budgeting/Management are: (1) the school budget becomes a more visible and effective policymaking tool, (2) instructional and administrative priorities are expressed through resource allocation, (3) resource allocation decisionmaking that best satisfies individual learning needs is made closer to the student by the school principal, staff, parents and community members and (4) there is greater probability that equal access through quality instruction is provided.

The Process

The process of School Site Budgeting/Management proceeds in the following manner: (1) a total, system-wide revenue target is established; (2) the basic system-wide costs are determined so such items as transportation, utilities and central administration are not charged to individual schools; (3) the remaining funds are distributed using a weighted pupil formula, i.e. High School Student: 1.25, Elementary School Student: 1.0, Kindergarten

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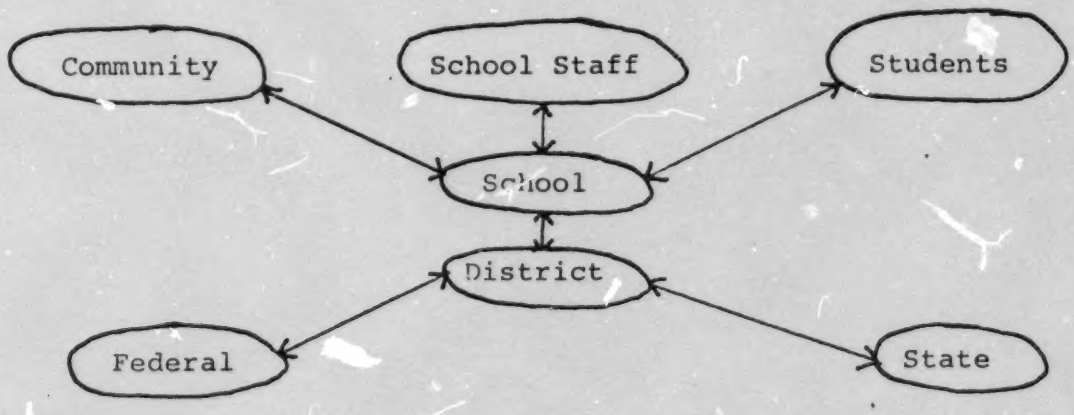
Student (half time): .5 and Special Education and Vocational Student: 2.0[1]; (4) the school principal involves teachers, parents, students and community members in the development of the school budget plan; (5) the principal presents the recommended budget to central office for review and possible revision; (6) at public hearings the principal presents the coming fiscal year's recommended building budget emphasizing program changes, procedures used to elicit advice from teachers, parents, students and the community and their spending priorities; (7) the basic budget is reviewed at the School Board's public hearings; (8) the School Board adopts the tentative budget for the following year and (9) the budget is approved by the appropriate Town Board.

The Principal

Since the educational needs of students in different schools are not always the same, the principal and teachers are in the best position to respond to the different needs. The decentralized decisionmaking of School Site Budgeting/Management is visualized in Figure One[2]:



The principal acts as an educational manager and needs to be

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competent in four areas of management: (1) Personnel Management with the authority to hire, assign and transfer personnel, plus direct involvement in salary negotiations and working conditions; (2) Program Management which includes school building bargaining on the content of the school program which reflect the educational needs and preferences of the students, parents, teachers and community; (3) Public Relations requiring two way communications which assists in the best possible educational decisionmaking of teachers, parents, students and community members; (4) Financial Management in computing school revenues (i.e. number of students times amount available for each category of students) plus the object budget of received funds and work flow budget providing information and student progress toward objectives with the actual school site budget.

Teachers

School Site Budgeting/Management directly involves teachers in program planning, development and evaluation decisions. They work more closely with parents, students, administrators and community members.

Citizen Participation - School-Community Councils

Parent and community participation in school decisionmaking is a key aspect of School Site Budgeting/Management. Since the principal is an integral component of a school's success, it is recommended that the School-Community Council participate in the selection of the principal.

The Council prepares an annual performance report for public distribution to assess the effectiveness of its local school to include (1) student performance, (2) program strengths, (3) program

deficiencies, (4) information on school staff, (5) information on the school and (6) opinion surveys about the school from parents, teachers, students and community members in meeting needs.

The State of the Art

Interviews were conducted in four cities - two suburban public school systems in the northeast and two urban public school systems in the midwest and northwestern United States. The school systems ranged in size from ten total schools to five hundred total schools in the district. They had all implemented degrees of School Site Budgeting/Management. The interviews elicited the following summary of findings: (1) School Site Budgeting/Management was initiated and implemented for reasons ranging from a new superintendent of schools who wanted a more responsive school system to citizen demand for information on program costs, implementation and evaluation; (2) the school principals involved in School Site Budgeting/Management received little to no training prior to implementation and learned as the process developed; (3) central office administrators did receive some training prior to implementation of School Site Budgeting/ Management; (4) teacher participation was not a problem to evoke, but most teachers could not believe that administrators were serious about teacher involvement; (5) parent participation was easy to bring forth, usually initiated through such groups as the P.T.A.; (6) on the average, implementation of School Site Budgeting/ Management took from one year to six years; (7) the degree of participation by teachers, parents, principals and the community was described as equal by all groups, with only one district identifying the principal as the dominant factor; (8) two of the

four school districts' Community Councils were involved in the selection of the principal; (9) two of the four districts had not fully implemented teacher scrutiny of school programs; (10) the principal was decribed as the presenter of the budget in two of the four sites; (11) two of the four district officers responsible for School Site Budgeting/Management thought this type of budgeting/management tended to reveal any existing staff weaknesses; (12) teacher collective bargaining was conducted district-wide, not by school; (13) students had little or no involvement in School-Community Councils and/or School Site Budgeting/Management; (14) all four districts described a resultant closer relationship between parents and teachers; (15) all four districts identified decisionmaking as being closer to the student/school; (16) longer range planning, i.e. five year versus one year immediate budgeting, was singled out as a means of improving School Site Budgeting/Management and (17) all four public school district officers stated they had a program-type budget format before initiating School Site Budgeting/Management.

Conclusion

The following items are School Site Budgeting/Management advantages: (1) faculty, principal, parents and community members work through goals, available resources and professional aims; (2) the principal becomes a leader and decisionmaker, and teachers are more influential and professional; (3) budgeting is more realistic and credible - closer to the student/school; (4) there is careful, cooperative examination of existing practices and programs by the principal, teachers, parents and community members; (5) teachers are involved in the school's financial status and spending limitations; (6) teachers must

balance salary expenditures and program goals and (7) systemwide equalized spending levels are documented through a weighted pupil formula i.e. High School Student 1.25, Elementary School Student, 1.0 .

The interviews reveal that there are varying degrees of implementation of the concept of School Site Budgeting/Management- for example one district's School-Community Council develops a school site budget, but does not participate in the selection of the school principal. Only one of the four cities identified as having implemented School Site Budgeting/Management closely approximated the concept and practices. The other three public school districts were moving toward what they called "pure" School Site Budgeting/Management incorporating decentralization through (1) weighted pupil formula used to distribute funds once the basic systemwide costs such as transportation, utility and maintenance were determined; (2) cooperative development and evaluation of the school site budget with the principal, teachers, parents, students and community members and (3) an Annual Performance Report for public distribution by parents, teachers, students, community members and the principal, as some examples of the total concept.

The public school district officers interviewed were unanimous in stating that (1) School Site Budgeting/Management does not encourage separate schools, but that schools with similar needs may tend to cluster; (2) parent, teacher and community involvement in decisionmaking results in greater support and administrators think they have more not less power to effect change because of this support and (3) the biggest claim for School Site Budgeting/

Management, based on their experiences, is that decisions are made closest to the student and that's what really sells it. Administrators are not giving students and parents an average decision, based on all the fourth grades in the district, for example, and they can do a much better job of looking at individual needs this way. In short, School Site Budgeting/Management is an idea whose time has come.[3]

School Site Management/Budgeting Interview Questions

1. Why did you initiate and implement school site management/ budgeting in your school system?
2. Have principals involved in school site management/budgeting received any training prior to implementation? What did it consist of?
3. What training was provided for central office administration?
4. How have central office administration responsibilities changed?
5. Was staff/teacher participation a problem? How was it solved?
6. Was parent participation easy or difficult to elicit?
7. In your experience, what have been the most successful methods/means of eliciting parent participation in school-site management/budgeting? PTA Meetings to consider budget plan? Committee Meetings? Open Meetings? Questionnaires? Other?
8. How long, from initiation to implementation, does school site management/budgeting take, on the average, in your experience?
9. Describe the degree and amount of participation teachers, parents, students, principals, community members have in a typical fiscal year, in your experience, with school site management/budgeting - on a base of 100%:

   teachers/staff_____ community_____
   parents_____ principal_____
   students_____

10. Is the School-Community Council involved in the selection of school principals?
11. On the basis of your experience, when teachers are involved

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11. (Continued) in school site management/budgeting, what are some typical "old practices" teachers choose to "wipe out" and what new practices do they select in having greater program scrutiny?

12. In assuring equality in all schools, except for documented special needs, is the effectiveness of the building principal's presentation of the budget, that is his/her skills as a presenter, a key factor in budget acceptance/approval? If s/he is less effective, is the school site budget jeopardized or do the weighted formula/budget recommendations, etc. speak for themselves?

13. Since the authority and responsibility the principal assumes are significant characteristics of school site management/budgeting, how frequently do principals discover they shouldn't be principals due to the program and instructional leadership aspects of school site management/budgeting?

14. In your experience in implementing school site management/budgeting, what weaknesses of staff are revealed? How are these weaknesses resolved? Does training solve the weakness or do staff transfer out of school site management/budgeting project sites?

15. Based on your experience, does school site management/budgeting:
    a. Create opportunities for leadership at the building level?
    b. Bring parents, students, staff members together?
    c. Help in collective bargaining matters?
    d. Other?

16. In your experience, has school site management/budgeting created a negative building/staff atmosphere due to staffing

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School Site Management/Budgeting Interview Questions (Continued)

16. (Continued) changes that result in the transfer or termination of colleagues? A concept of separate schools?
17. What are the most difficult aspects of school site management/budgeting to implement?
18. What are the advantages of school site management/budgeting based on your experience? Is budgeting more realistic/credible?
19. What could make school site management/budgeting better? Pre-service of principals, teachers? State assistance? Fiscal incentives? Other?
20. What type of budget format did you have before school site management/budgeting?

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Notes

1. John Greenhalgh, "School Site Budgeting," The School Administrator (December 1981).
2. Lawrence C. Pierce, "School Based Management," University of Oregon (July 1978).
3. James W. Guthrie ed. "School Site Management," School Finance Practices: The 1980's. A Decade of Conflict, Cambridge Massachusetts: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1980.